

VZCZCXRO7735
OO RUEHCN
DE RUEHIN #0605/01 1390949
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 190949Z MAY 09
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1604
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9193
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0702
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0168
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 3109
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0256
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0625
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 7057
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000605

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER PREMIER SU TSENG-CHANG DISCUSSES DPP
DEMONSTRATION AND PARTY FUTURE

REF: A. TAIPEI 589

[B](#). TAIPEI 594

[C](#). 08 TAIPEI 1569

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#). (C) Summary: The May 17-18 demonstrations against President Ma Ying-jeou and his policies were "satisfactory," former Premier and opposition DPP heavyweight Su Tseng-chang told the Director during a May 19 meeting. The DPP-organized demonstrations gave a boost to Tsai Ing-wen, but the DPP Chair will still have a tough time retaining her position given the party's dwindling chances in upcoming local elections. The KMT's strategy, Su said, is to thwart the DPP's (and his) effort to win the critical Taipei County race by postponing the election there until [2](#)2010. End Summary.

"Satisfactory, Smooth" Demonstrations

[2](#). (C) During an hour-plus meeting with the Director May 19, former Premier and DPP Chairman Su Tseng-chang refrained from calling the May 17-18 DPP and pro-Green protests against President Ma and his policies a success but said they were "satisfactory" and proceeded "smoothly." Su estimated that 3,000 people, including some 200 DPP officials, participated in the 24-hour sit-in that began at 10:15 p.m. on May 17. (Note: The number of participants fluctuated throughout the period, with the crowd growing at night, after the workday ended.) He noted that he was still recuperating from the events as he had never before pulled an all-nighter. Su said it was "difficult," but the DPP ended the demonstration over the objections of some supporters who wanted to continue the protest through to the May 20 anniversary of Ma's first year in office. (Note: Some protesters are continuing their sit-in in front of the Legislative Yuan.)

[3](#). (C) While hesitant to label the demonstrations a resounding success, Su pointed out some of the upsides for the DPP. The May 14 visit he and DPP Chairwoman Tsai Ing-wen paid on detained former President Chen Shui-bian dampened the support for Chen in the Taipei demonstrations. Although there was not a large display of support for Chen, Su acknowledged some Chen advocates marched from the detention center and eventually joined the route that Su led. (Note: The May 17 Taipei demonstration consisted of a march with four themed routes and a rally. See refs A and B.) Su

admitted the outward support for Chen was more visible at the pro-Green protest in Kaohsiung, explaining that those who wanted to rally on Chen's behalf primarily participated in the Kaohsiung demonstration organized by Southern Taiwan Society and other groups.

14. (C) Despite the wide discrepancies in the participant estimates for both the Taipei and Kaohsiung events, Su noted that there had never been such a large non-DPP organized rally in Kaohsiung before. (Note: The Kaohsiung organizers claimed 200,000 participants, while the police estimated 40,000. The DPP claimed 600,000 people joined the Taipei rally while government and police estimates ranged from 60,000 to 100,000.) Su also claimed the march he led (themed "Protect the Disadvantaged") attracted several "tens of thousands" of supporters, not just the 10,000 people the police estimated.

15. (C) The Taipei events also gave a small boost to DPP Chair Tsai, Su said, who admitted that leading the party remains a "very tough job" for her. Tsai "improved her capabilities" by staying with the DPP protesters until the end of the main demonstrations, in contrast to last November, when she left the scene and protesters ended up clashing with the police (see ref C). Also, when Chen supporters rushed toward the stage at the end of the sit-in in an effort to urge participants to continue protesting, Tsai convinced the crowd that the opposition must focus its efforts on "saving Taiwan" and not just one individual.

Local Elections Critical For DPP And Its Chair

TAIPEI 00000605 002 OF 002

16. (C) Su noted that Tsai's leadership problems were both rooted externally and self-inflicted. She took the reins of the party with the understanding that elders such as himself would fade from the scene. Instead, he said, many have since returned to politics because of her weak leadership. Indeed, some, Su claimed, hope to replace Tsai should the party not perform well in the December local elections. Tsai has made many missteps and her "hesitant" manner in handling issues is hurting her. Citing the example of the nomination of the DPP Tainan County Magistrate candidate, Su said Tsai was "too slow" in coordinating the party's decision, which in turn gave former Presidential Office Secretary-General Mark Chen false hope. (Note: Mark Chen insists he is still running for magistrate even though the DPP has nominated Legislator Lee Chun-ye.)

17. (C) The KMT's strategy is to elevate Taipei County to a special municipality, Su maintained, to thwart the possibility of a DPP victory in the December election by postponing a contest for that jurisdiction. Taipei County will certainly be elevated, he said, and Kaohsiung City and County merged. The KMT would likely lose an election for Taipei County Magistrate in December, and the party and Ma did not want to take that risk. Su claimed that Ma asked Taoyuan County Magistrate Eric Chu and Taichung County Magistrate Jason Hu to run but neither was interested. Taking Taipei and Kaohsiung counties out of the running in December hurts the DPP, since both are important contests where the DPP stands a good chance of winning. Beyond Taipei and Kaohsiung, Su was optimistic that the party could retain Pingtung and Tainan counties but admitted that the remaining contests would be tough to win. (Note: The DPP now holds 6 of 23 localities). If the party does not do well, Tsai may have to step down, he suggested.

Ma, 2012, and WHA

18. (C) Asked what he, the DPP's supposed but unannounced candidate for Taipei County Magistrate, would do if there was not a race for him to run, Su said he would travel around

Taiwan to gather support, referring to but not explicitly saying the 2012 presidential election. Su noted that Ma's public support ratings had indeed improved, aided by the stock market's upward trend as well as Taiwan's participation in the World Health Assembly (WHA). He predicted Ma's chances of securing a second term will be good if he can weather the next three years without major challenges. Su welcomed Taiwan's participation in the WHA as a positive move but found the name pinned on Taiwan problematic. He feared that countries would start to refer to Taiwan as a province since that is how the WHA has labeled the island.

Comment

19. (C) Su is one of the most respected DPP leaders these days, and has been generally supportive of Chairwoman Tsai's leadership in the party. He remains the odds-on favorite to face Ma Ying-jeou in 2012 for the presidency, but as he noted here, without greater unity in the DPP and some missteps by Ma, the KMT is likely to retain power until 2016.

YOUNG